



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE CONSPIRACIES OF THE REBELLION.

THE first conspiracy of the rebellion was for the abduction of James Buchanan, then President of the United States. Its object was to hold him as a hostage, in order to effect more easily terms of compromise with the North. The motive of the conspirators did not involve the death of any one. The plan was to kidnap Buchanan, take him out of Washington, and, as he disappeared, to inaugurate Breckenridge president.

The leader of it was Mr. Wigfall, then senator from Texas, but it failed for want of unity of purpose. On Christmas day, 1860, Wigfall went to the house of Mr. Floyd, Secretary of War, taking other gentlemen with him. Mr. Floyd heard the emissaries through, and then, in a most emphatic manner, refused to have anything to do with such a conspiracy. Disappointed in Floyd's conclusion and action, Wigfall lost his temper and deported himself in a boisterous manner. This conspiracy was mainly made up of the Southern people, but embraced prominent men at Washington and some in New York. It was the only one formed during the rebellion which had anything in it except crime. This had a logical, sensible purpose, and who can measure or define the difference to this country whether it had succeeded or not.

The next conspiracy was to kill President Lincoln at Baltimore, on his way to Washington to be inaugurated. At that time, the journey of the President to Washington had become something of a triumphal march, and in the passage of Mr. Lincoln large assemblages convened along the route at the prominent towns where he made speeches. The plan of his journey took him to Harrisburg the twenty-second of February, and through Baltimore to Washington on the twenty-third, passing Baltimore about eleven o'clock in the morning and arriving at Washington later the same day.

At that time there lived in Chicago a man by the name of Allan Pinkerton, the President of a detective agency there, and of other co-operative branches in the principal cities of the United States. He was a man of real integrity, and stood well with the prominent men of the country, and he and his force were often employed by the railroads and express companies in ferreting out crimes. Early in the year 1861, Mr. Pinkerton, at Chicago, received a letter from Samuel H. Felton, then President of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad, requesting his presence in Philadelphia. Going there, he was told that the company had learned that schemes were on foot for the injury of their railroad, and the obstruction of travel. Communication with the North could be cut off in this manner, and by the destruction of bridges along this line of railroad, or of ferry-boats, which transmitted the trains at Havre de Grace. Mr. Pinkerton visited various points along the road, and stationed his men, among other places, at Perryville, Havre de Grace, and Baltimore. He found all desire to injure the road resulted from a wish to prevent the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, and the ultimate design of this contemplated disturbance was purely political.

With a view to penetrate this plot, Mr. Pinkerton stationed men of fine address and appearance at the leading hotels in Baltimore; they claiming to have come from New Orleans and other Southern cities, where they were actually familiar with the localities in such cities, and, going to Baltimore himself, instructed them to assume the appearance of secessionists, wear secession badges, talk secession talk, mingle with secession men, and report to him at his office in that city, approachable by an alley. One of these was Timothy Webster, who was afterwards hung as a Union spy in Richmond, Virginia. These men attended secession meetings, floated with the tide of public opinion, joined in the conspiracy itself, assisted in the formation of a design to assassinate the President, and attended the meetings at which the men were selected for the act of killing. Mr. Pinkerton had also a lady who represented herself as being from Montgomery, Alabama, where she had actually lived, and she moved in society in Baltimore to learn what the ladies had to say on the subject.

The plan there matured was, when the train should arrive upon the railroad from Harrisburg, at eleven o'clock in the morning, for these conspirators to collect at the depot, near where Mr.

Lincoln would be, and that a riot should be excited, and Mr. Lincoln killed in the confusion.

By the time these facts had been ascertained, he had reached New York on his way from Springfield to Washington. Pinkerton left Baltimore and went to Philadelphia, where he met Mr. Judd, from Chicago, and of the President's party, and late in the evening of the twenty-first made known the facts as above stated to him and Mr. Lincoln.

General Winfield Scott was then Commander-in-Chief of the army of the United States, and in that capacity had charge of Mr. Lincoln's inauguration. It was his duty to see that that inauguration took place peaceably. News of this conspiracy having come to his knowledge, he placed the details of the investigation in the hands of his Inspector-General, Col. Charles P. Stone. Mr. Stone, in an article in the *Century* for July, 1883, page 465, thus describes what was done by himself independently and not knowing of anything done by Mr. Pinkerton. He says :

“ I received daily numerous communications from various parts of the country, informing me of plots to prevent the arrival of the President-elect at the capital. These warnings came from St. Louis, from Chicago, from Cincinnati, from Pittsburgh, from New York, from Philadelphia, and, especially, from Baltimore. Every morning I reported to General Scott on the occurrences of the night and the information received by the morning's mail ; and every evening I rendered an account of the day's work and received instructions for the night. General Scott also received numerous warnings of danger to the President-elect which he would give me to study and compare. Many of the communications were anonymous and vague. But, on the other hand, many were from calm and wise men, one of whom became, shortly afterward, a Cabinet Minister ; one was a railway President, another a distinguished ex-Governor of a State, etc., etc. In every case where the indications were distinct, they were followed up to learn if real danger existed.

“ So many clear indications pointed to Baltimore, that three good detectives of the New York police force were constantly employed there. These men reported frequently to me, and their statements were constantly compared with the information received from independent sources.

“ Doubtless, Mr. Lincoln, at his home in Springfield, received

many and contradictory reports from the Capital, for he took his own way of obtaining information. One night between eleven o'clock and midnight, while I was busy in my study over the papers of the day and evening, a card was brought me, bearing the name 'Mr. Leonard Swett,' and upon it was written, in the well-known hand of General Scott, 'General Stone, Inspector-General, may converse freely with Mr. Swett.' I gave orders for his admission, and a tall gentleman of marked features entered my room. At first I thought that Mr. Lincoln himself was present, so much, at first glance, did Mr. Swett's face resemble the portraits I had seen of Mr. Lincoln, and so nearly did his height correspond with that attributed to the President-elect. But I quickly found that the gentleman's card bore his true name, and that Mr. Swett had come directly from Mr. Lincoln, having his full confidence, to see for him the state of affairs in Washington, and report back to him in person. * * *

"As President Lincoln approached the capital, it became certain that desperate attempts would be made to prevent his arriving there. To be thoroughly informed as to what might be expected in Baltimore, I directed a detective to be constantly near the Chief of Police and to keep up relations with him; while two others were instructed to watch independent and without knowledge of the Chief of Police. The officer who was near the Chief of Police reported regularly, until near the last, that there was no danger in Baltimore, but the others discovered a band of desperate men plotting for the destruction of Mr. Lincoln during his passage through the city, and by affiliating with them, these detectives got at the details of the plot. Mr. Lincoln passed through Baltimore in advance of the time announced for the journey in accordance with advice given by me to Mr. Seward and which was carried by Mr. Frederick Seward to Mr. Lincoln."

Mr. Lincoln, in December, 1864, related to Benjamin J. Lossing the circumstances of his trip to Washington, at the time of the inauguration. He said :

"I arrived at Philadelphia on the twenty-first. I agreed to stop one night, and on the following morning hoist the flag over Independence Hall. In the evening there was a great crowd when I received my friends at the Continental Hotel. Mr. Judd, a warm, personal friend from Chicago, sent for me to come to his room. I went, and found there Mr. Pinkerton, a skillful police

detective, also from Chicago, who had been employed for some days in Baltimore, watching and searching for suspicious persons there. Pinkerton informed me that a plan had been laid for my assassination, the exact time I expected to come through Baltimore being publicly known. He was well informed as to the plan, but did not know that the conspirators would have pluck enough to execute it. He urged me to go right through to Washington that night. I did not like that. I had made arrangements to visit Harrisburg and go from there to Baltimore, and had resolved to do so. * * * When I was making my way back to my room through crowds of people, I met Frederick W. Seward. We went together to my room, when he told me that he had been sent at the instance of his father and General Scott, and informed me that *their detectives* in Baltimore had discovered the plot there to assassinate me. They knew nothing of Pinkerton's movements. I now believed such a plot to be in existence."

The change in the programme of the journey occurred at Harrisburg at a dinner on the night of the twenty-first, which was presided over by Governor Curtin, and the circumstances are told by Alexander K. McClure, in a paper to the "Clover Club," of Philadelphia. It seems that General Scott and Mr. Seward, being for some reasons alarmed at the continuance by Mr. Lincoln of the original plan of his journey, sent a dispatch to Governor Curtin, which was received at the dinner over which he was presiding at Harrisburg. I give the language of Mr. McClure :

"While all were intent on the enjoyment of a dinner, with the new president as the central figure of the feast, a message was brought by a servant and quietly handed to Governor Curtin. The mere interruption of presenting a message to the Governor in his own capital attracted no special attention ; but when the smile fled, and a sudden cloud of despair fixed itself upon his face, there was ominous silence and painful suspense around the table before a word was spoken. Mr. Lincoln was among the first to note that a shadow had been suddenly flung upon the circle, and he did not conceal his anxiety to learn the cause. The truth was soon made known by Governor Curtin. The message he had received was a joint one from General Winfield Scott and Senator Seward, who had already been designated as premier of the new administration, and it notified the Governor that Mr. Lincoln could not pass through Baltimore alive on the following day, and

peremptorily commanded a change of route and programme to save the life of the President-elect.

“ It is needless to say that the occasion was no longer one of festivity. The solemnity of the funeral quickly enthroned itself where there had been pleasant converse and welcome wit but a moment before. All but one of the dozen or more men present seemed utterly appalled, and that one was Abraham Lincoln. While every other face was pale with apprehension, he maintained the same sober, sad expression that he had exhibited from the beginning, and as usual he said nothing until all the others had spoken and he was personally appealed to for his views. One by one, beginning with Governor Curtin, gave pointed expression to the judgment that Mr. Lincoln’s route and programme must be changed, and that it must be done without publicity. The silence of Mr. Lincoln had hardly been noted until all but himself had spoken, in the intensity of their feelings ; and then, as if suddenly called to the recollection of the presence of the man who was the decreed victim of the assassin, all turned to him for counsel. Even when personally appealed to, he seemed reluctant to answer ; but, when pressed to acquiesce in the unanimous judgment of his friends, he said, with scarcely a tremor in his clear voice : ‘ What would the people think of their ruler stealing into his capital like a thief in the night ? ’ He seemed to think little of the peril to his life, but he thought much of the peril of forfeiting the respect of the nation. Mr. Lincoln’s unwillingness to assent to a change of route and programme brought the dinner-guests to face a new duty. Instead of suggesting, one by one, they followed Governor Curtin in commanding, and the President-elect was notified that the time and manner of pursuing his journey to Washington had passed beyond his discretion, and that he must defer to such measures as could be devised for his safety. He silently acquiesced ; but his was the only face at the table that was not blanched with fear. Colonel (Thomas A.) Scott, the keenest of all in perception, and the boldest to execute, at once proposed a new route and programme, and suggested all its details. His plan was promptly and gratefully accepted, and Mr. Lincoln himself seemed to share the general sense of relief when Colonel Scott’s programme was settled. The first duty was to avoid even the suspicion outside that the route or time of the President had been changed. To mislead the vast crowd that

surrounded the hotel, a carriage was ostentatiously called for Governor Curtin and President Lincoln, and they walked out together, entered the carriage, and ordered the driver to take them to the Executive Mansion. This was a natural proceeding, and attracted no attention ; but the Executive Mansion was not the destination of the two distinguished executives. Before they had started, Colonel Scott and myself hastened to the Pennsylvania Railroad depot, where he promptly cleared one of his tracks to Philadelphia, gave some confidential instructions by telegraph to a trusted agent in West Philadelphia, had a special engine and car made ready, and then I saw him personally superintend the cutting of every telegraph line that entered Harrisburg. By the time that was accomplished, a carriage stopped near the depot where there were no brilliant rays of gas-light, and the Governor and the President-elect, who had driven circuitously to the depot, alighted. Mr. Lincoln and Colonel Lamon entered the special car, and they were soon whirling along on their way to the City of Brotherly Love."

It is fortunate for the nation that the solution of this question, so fraught with the gravest consequences, among others, fell upon two such men as Thomas A. Scott and Alexander K. McClure. The writer heard Mr. Lincoln say in the fall of 1864, after a protracted interview with him, and after Mr. McClure had left, that he had more brain power than any man he had ever known, and everybody who knew Thomas A. Scott knows that he saw the intricacies and the solution of any complicated question, at a glance, as accurately as most men see them in afterthought. He was the brightest, quickest, and promptest man of his time.

Pinkerton had been left at Philadelphia to arrange matters there, in case an emergency should arise. As the special from Harrisburg would arrive before the train for Washington would leave, Mr. Pinkerton received Mr. Lincoln and Colonel Lamon at the depot, with a private carriage, and drove about the city, until it was time for the train to start for Washington. The party then took the rear car, the last half of which, divided off by a curtain, had been engaged by Pinkerton's lady, for a sick brother, and Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Lamon, Mr. Pinkerton, and the lady, occupied this part of the sleeper for the journey.

They left Philadelphia about eleven o'clock. Not a soul except the four people in the rear end of the car, and the few at the

dinner party at Harrisburg, knew that Mr. Lincoln had left that city or was on his way to Washington.

He could not, of course, take a large number of persons with him without attracting attention and betraying his presence, and therefore reduced his arrangements for defense upon that journey to the smallest possible compass, by the selection of Ward H. Lamon as his only companion. Lamon was a native of Virginia, who had come to Danville, Illinois, at an early day, and for many years had practiced law as the partner of Lincoln, on the circuit at that place. He was all over a Virginian, and strong, stout, and athletic—a Hercules in stature, tapering from his broad shoulders to his heels, and the handsomest man, physically, I ever saw. He was skilled in all the ways of the manly art, thirty-four years of age, six feet high, and, although prudent and cautious, was thoroughly courageous and bold. He wore that night two ordinary pistols, two Derringers, and two large knives. You could put no more elements of attack or defense in a human skin than there were in Lamon and his armory on that occasion.

Mr. Lincoln selected him for this place because the two were wholly unlike, and each admired in the other qualities he himself did not possess. Lincoln knew the shedding the last drop of blood in his defense would be the most delightful act of Lamon's life, and, that in him, he had a regiment, armed and drilled for the most efficient service.

Having taken possession of the rear end of their car, the conductor was handed a package of papers, for which he had been instructed by telegram to wait. It is not true that Lincoln wore a Scotch cap or used any other mode of disguise. All the persons accompanying him were dressed in ordinary dress, and went simply as private citizens.

They arrived at Baltimore at three o'clock and waited there, because of some ordinary detention, about two hours. Before the train left, workmen began to come around, and one was heard to say, with expletives, that "Old Lincoln is coming here to-day, but I don't believe he will get through alive." Mr. Lincoln laughed heartily at the remark, and soon the train pulled out, and a little after daylight he reached Washington.

During the rebellion, occasional confirmations crept out as to the existence and real purposes of this conspiracy. Shortly after being appointed marshal of the District of Columbia, Mr. Lamon

arrested a very bad and notorious man in Washington. This man believed himself to be in danger on account of a political offense he had committed, and was greatly alarmed, and Lamon, whose perceptions were keen and clear, discovered from his conversation that he knew something of moment, and consequently cultivated him, and finally said to him frankly, if he would tell him all he knew he would endeavor to shield him from the charge on which he was arrested. The man did so, and his disclosures confirmed fully the existence of the conspiracy in Baltimore. He named many of the men engaged in it, and stated that the purposes of it were to kill Mr. Lincoln in the riot and confusion created at the depot.

Again, later on in the war, Lamon had occasion to arrest a notorious and dangerous man in Baltimore. The circumstances of his arrest were simply terrific, but, finally, he was captured, and during his confinement, made to Lamon, a confession of the conspiracy at Baltimore, and named many parties engaged in it. He also said that the purposes of this conspiracy were to kill Mr. Lincoln.

It is doubtful if there was any time during the war, in which there was not in Washington, Baltimore, or in that general vicinity, some conspiracy in existence to capture or injure Mr. Lincoln. On one occasion, in the summer of 1863, if I remember rightly, the writer of this article had occasion, with William H. Hanna, of Bloomington, Ill., to ride to the Soldiers' Home, about four miles from Washington, to call upon Mr. Lincoln in the evening. Our driver missed the way, passing by the Home into the forest below. Being once in the intricacies of this labyrinth, we did not get out until two o'clock in the morning, and the question arose, why the rebels might not send a force across the river, and coming up in the woods to the Soldiers' Home, capture Mr. Lincoln and carry him within the enemy's lines. Mr. Hanna was very much concerned in reference to the situation, and I said to him, "You go and talk with Mr. Lincoln, you are a new man." The subject of his capture or assassination had been discussed until it was a sore subject between Mr. Lincoln and his friends. So, the next day, we got Marshal Lamon, and the three obtained an audience with the President.

"I cannot be shut up in an iron cage and guarded," he said. "If I have business at the War Office, I must take my hat and go

there ; and if to kill me is within the purposes of this rebellion, no precaution can prevent it. You may guard me at a single point, but I will necessarily be exposed at others. People come to see me every day and I receive them, and I do not know but that some of them are secessionists or engaged in plots to kill me. The truth is, if any man has made up his mind that he will give his life for mine, he can take mine."

We argued that, while this was true, it was his duty to the country not unnecessarily to expose himself, that, there being no guard at the Soldiers' Home, and the condition of the country below as described, it was recklessness upon his part to go there and be there without a guard.

He raised various objections, and finally we said, "Somebody must do something if anything is done. Will you leave it to us three to make such disposition as we think to be prudent, and will you simply acquiesce in what we do?" Finally, in substance, he assented, and we went to Secretary Stanton and got for him the guard of cavalry, which accompanied him every evening from the White House to the Soldiers' Home, and remained at the Home all night and came in with him in the morning.

Mr. Lamon's official duties embraced the safety of the President, and these facts, with many others, made a deep impression upon his mind. During the fall of 1864, I was a guest at his house nearly three months. During that time he did not sleep at home a single night, but left his house about ten o'clock, went to the White House, and with a guard which he stationed there, and without Mr. Lincoln's knowledge, remained during the night. At the time of the assassination Lamon was, unfortunately, out of the city, and his absence occurred in this wise : Mr. Lincoln had just returned from Richmond, and having inaugurated some steps looking toward the holding of a convention to get that State back into the Union, he asked Lamon, being a Virginian, to go to Richmond and attend this convention. The following is the pass which he gave him :

"Allow the bearer, Ward H. Lamon, and friend, with ordinary baggage, to pass from Washington to Richmond and return.

"A. LINCOLN.

"April 11, 1865."

Lamon said to the President as he separated from him, "Make me one promise."

“What is that?” said the President, “perhaps I can.”

“I want you to promise not to go to the theatre during my absence.”

“Well,” said he, after some conversation, “I will do the best I can,” then turning to John P. Usher, who was present at the interview, he said in substance, “My friend is crazy on the subject of my assassination.”

When Mr. Seward first became conscious after the attack upon him, he said, “Where was Colonel Lamon? If he had been in the city this would not have happened.” He repeated this remark often afterwards.

But Mr. Lincoln *did* go to the theatre on the night of the eventful fourteenth, and the stealthy tread of the murderer followed him. There was a pistol shot which echoed through the land, louder than the cannon’s roar, and a murderous horseman dashed into the night. A tall man, wounded and limp, was carried to the nearest house and stretched upon his bed to die. Men who had faced death where the fire danced along the weird line of battle without blanching, stood around his bed and wept. The blood oozed from his head until it soaked through the bed and dropped from the under side. Towards morning there was a convulsive struggle and the spirit of Abraham Lincoln passed to where the angel at the gate said:

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

LEONARD SWETT.